



**Early Childhood Iowa Area Board
Minutes
Thursday February 19, 2026
Virtual Meeting**

Board Meeting (Information)

Board Vice-Chairperson Westbrook convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Attendance (Information)

(x means attendance at the meeting)

Board member	Representation	Attendance
Catherine Reaman-Gerdes	Human Service	
Christine Lundy	Education	x
Colleen Strohmaier	Business	
Jacob Gunn	Parent	x
Jessica Petter	Health	x
Nancy Krause	Citizen	x
Rita Martens - Chairperson	Citizen	
Shelley Flanery	Citizen	x
Wendy Sawyer	Faith	
Ricki Hall	Citizen	
Jovanka Westbrook	Citizen	x

4 R Kids Staff Present (Information)

Debra Schrader, Executive Director.

Others present (Information)

Sheena Sullivan and Rachel Bardwell (Short Years Partnership).

Distinction of Quorum (Information)

Board membership consists of no less than 8 members and no more than 12 members, with 11 positions filled at the beginning of the meeting; 6 or 55% of board members present at the meeting representing quorum.

Open Forum (Information)

None

Introductions (Information)

Introductions were made by Board members and the audience.

Board Professional Development (Information)

Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Bardwell from Short Years Partnership provided a presentation about Parents as Teachers home visitation.

Agenda (Action)

Board member Gunn moved to approve the February 19, 2026 agenda. Board member Flanery seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes (Action)

Board member Krause moved to approve the December 18, 2025 minutes with correction of the date. Board member Petter seconded. Motion carried unanimously

Board Membership and Recruitment (Information)

There is a Dallas County board membership open on the board. Recruitment efforts continue.

ECI Director Performance Review (Information)

The board was reminded of the annual ECI director performance review to be conducted by the April 16, 2026 board meeting. Information will be sent out utilizing a Google survey for board members to complete.

Legislative Update (Information)

ECI Director Schrader provided an overview of SSB3111 and companion bill HSB623. The bill has passed out of subcommittee in both chambers with amendments that have not been published on the legislative website, it was passed with a concept of an amendment. SSB3111 passed out of the Senate full committee on Thursday February 19, 2026. The House committee has not set a date for HSB623. This is an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services bill that will dismantle Early Childhood Iowa, Decategorization, Community Partnership for Protecting Children, and Prevention Child Abuse Prevention. HHS proposes to take control of family support programs and funding to be administered at the state level starting in FY28. No one that has registered for SSB3111 bill that is support of dismantling the programs. Director Schrader provided oral comments at the February 17, 2026 House subcommittee. Director Schrader has been in communication with several legislators regarding concerns of the bill.

Finance Committee (Action)

The Finance Committee reviewed budgets, payment vouchers, bank statements, and fund balance reconciliations prior to the board meeting. Board member Petter moved to approve the December 2025 and January 2026 expenditures in the amount of \$109,640.79 and \$146,148.22 respectively. Board member Flanery seconded. Motion carried unanimously. It was noted the current rate of spending for FY26 is 48.0% for ECI funding and 100% of ARPA funding.

Board Program and Service Committee

The committee meet February 6, 2026. Board member Krause was the reporter for the meeting

FY27 Preschool Tuition and Transportation Policy (Action)

Board member Krause moved to make two changes to the FY27 preschool tuition scholarship policy; the cap will change from \$225 to \$240 and adding the requirement of adding a notice of decision from HHS regarding denial or acceptance from HHS and to approve FY27 preschool transportation policy with one change; raising the maximum reimbursement rate from \$12 to \$15 per day. Board member Petter seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

FY27 Request for Proposal (Information)

An FY27 request for proposal process will be utilized for FY27 programming. The RFP will be released March 13, 2026. The RFP will be posted on the 4 R Kids ECI website.

FY27 Family Support Enrollment Criteria (Information)

The state ECI board has approved new family support enrollment criteria; 100% of families will be required to met at least one of seven new risk criteria starting July 1, 2026.

2nd Quarterly Report (Information)

The committee reviewed the 2nd quarter progress reports from the contractors. The 2nd quarter reports are located on the 4 R Kids website. It was noted that the expenditure rate was 37% on target is 50%. Notes of interest was shared with the board.

Corrective Action Plan (Information)

The committee reviewed Lutheran Services in Iowa's update to the corrective action plan due to staffing issues. LSI will stay on a corrective action plan through the end of the fiscal year with weekly updates. A new 1.0 FTE staff person was hired in November 2025; the other 1.0 FTE has been open for two years. Director Schrader met with LSI on February 11, 2026 to review progress and review contract compliance. Next committee meeting is May 1, 2026 at 9:00.

Board Process Committee

The committee met February 5, 2026. Board member Lundy was the reporter for the committee.

FY27 Marketing and Public Awareness Evaluation (Information)

The committee reviewed efforts of the past fiscal year in regards to marketing and public awareness. It was noted that \$1,429 was spent on activities which is less than the previous fiscal year. It was also noted a marketing and public awareness plan is not a requirement of a local ECI board but the board continues with the practice.

Bylaws (Information)

The board bylaws were reviewed; there is one minor change to the bylaws; change to where to post of the board agenda. This item will be an action item at the next board meeting. This is considered the 1st reading of the bylaws and will be on the April 16, 2026 agenda for action.

Policy and Procedure Manual and Personnel Handbook (Action)

Board member Petter moved to accept changes in 9 policies regarding funding language and to add a credit card policy and to approve changes to the personnel handbook by adding an additional paid holiday, minor changes to the ECI director job description, and changes to the meal and hotel allowances. Board member Lundy seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

FY27 Board Meeting Calendar (Information)

The committee drafted the FY27 board meeting calendar, it mirrors the FY26 calendar.

Miscellaneous Board Update

None.

Administrative Update *(Information)*

Director Schrader disseminated an administrative update.

- State ECI board update;
- Legislation update;
- Onsite contractor visits;
- Board committees;
- ECI quarterly reimbursement;
- Thrive Pilot update;
- FY25 state ECI annual report;
- Thrive Iowa report;
- Success story;
- Out of office dates;
- Marketing and public awareness activities.

Miscellaneous Board Updates *(Information)*

None

Next meeting *(Information)*

Board Vice-Chairperson Westbrook adjourned the meeting at 7:48 p.m. The next meeting is April 16, 2026 and will be virtual.